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MFA FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

by

LINDA ELIZABETH CARREIRO

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS


IN

PAINTING

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

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Final Visual Presentation

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I hereby release the following works for incorporation into the University Collections,
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TITLE	DATE	MEDIUM	SIZE
A Woman's Work is Never Done	1996	Oil & Acrylic with Charcoal on board	7'x6'6"

The Seven Deadly Sins and a Murder of Crows



Linda Carreiro

This exhibition is the final visual presentation in partial fulfillment
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in
Painting

Opening reception:

Friday, November 29, 1996

7 pm - 10 pm

Nov 26 to Dec 8, 1996

**FAB Gallery 1-1 Fine Arts Building University of Alberta 112 Street and 89 Avenue
Edmonton, Canada T6G 2C9 (403) 492-2081**



Linda Carreiro

*The
Seven
Deadly
Sins
and
a
Murder
of
Crows*

The Seven Deadly Sins and A Murder of Crows

Delving into a past rife with musky church pews, visions of eternal flames and an abundance of guilt, I approach the topic of sin with an unsettling balance of derision and trepidation. The Seven Deadly Sins, which stem from Judeo-Christian writings, are innate human characteristics, an embodiment of the potential in all of us to “sin”. For this series of paintings I return to the original definitions of the cardinal sins as expressed by Pope Gregory the Great in the 6th century: **Pride**, the most deadly of the sins as it is the root of all the others, reflects an arrogance that places one too close to God; **Anger**, or more accurately, uncontrolled rage; **Envy**, a deeper disdain than simply jealousy; **Sloth**, a combination of despair and spiritual *ennui*; **Greed**, which encompasses both avarice and covetousness; **Gluttony**, an inability or unwillingness to restrain from overindulgence and excess; **Lust**, a lack of control over sexual desires.

While this body of work began as a contemporary re-examination of these centuries-old ideas of spirit, it also became an *inquisition* into my own Catholic upbringing and current state of being. The narrative nature of the paintings, therefore, become both autobiographical and pan-optic. Using women as the central characters for the paintings, I also revert to the traditional representation of these vices through the female. As the opposing virtues were also most often depicted with images of women, it brings forward the question of the sins on a more political and personal level.

The Seven Deadly Sins have appeared in art and literature for centuries. Since my own work is highly influenced by literature, history and film, the resulting images of this series closely resemble stage sets. Through colour symbology, unusual vantage points and dramatic lighting, I want to convey a psychological, as well as sociological, examination of these states of mind. The gestures of the figures, particularly their hands, play an important role in the evocation, as does the placement of the characters within their space and within their own body. Through the introduction of historical, religious and literary references, an inter-play is created between the subject as depicted in the present and the subject as a vessel of the past.

The crow and the raven, two birds long associated with death and uncertainty, appear as characters in each of the Seven Deadly Sin paintings. The inclusion of these *corvids* in the scenes brings out their multiple representations in different cultures: trickster, messenger, aerial spirit, prophet, judge, indulger, omen of doom. While their presence seems unnoticed by the characters within the

paintings, the placement of these birds in the environments both as witness and symbol intentionally creates a strange dynamic involving the viewer. They are meant to be simultaneously integrated *and* out of context. This dichotomy presents itself on another level, as well. In Norse mythology, the God Oden was accompanied by two ravens, Hugin or *thought*, and Munin or *memory*. Together these birds encompass *knowledge*. Passages of paint remain transparent or incomplete in the exhibition, allowing both the artist and viewer to trace the *memory* of the process. Other areas of the surfaces are built up to emphasize a particular focal point or idea, an affirmation of *thought*. There is also a conceding of some loss of control in the paint handling within this series, all of which become a reflection of both subject and life experience.

In medieval times, crows or ravens appearing together in groups was thought to be a foretelling of evil events ahead. A cluster of crows is referred to as a "murder", a group of ravens poetically as an "unkindness". The individual portraits of these birds continue the autobiographical nature of the entire exhibition, becoming not only personal icons of spirit and flesh, but bringing about their roles of prophecy, change, chaos and ultimately, death. These works on paper also echo the Seven Deadly Sins, as within the ravens and crows I convey pride, anger, sloth, gluttony (the raven is depicted, not coincidentally, in the painting of Gluttony, as it is considered the bird of self-indulgence).

While my initial intention for **the Seven Deadly Sins and A Murder of Crows** was to question the present relevance of a concept over 1000 years old, I found in this exploration a topic rich in dualities, predestinations and possibilities. Thus, I end up by opening a dialogue about these sins on many different levels. It has become the body of work most closely linked to self thus far, and like Oden's ravens, fraught with memory, thought and knowledge.

Linda Carreiro,
November, 1996

Acknowledgements

There have been so many kind and supportive people since my arrival in Edmonton, individuals who have helped me more than I can express on a small page of acknowledgements. I will, nonetheless, try to convey my thanks to them on this paper, and hope that this, along with my actions, will impart my respect and appreciation for all they've done.

To all my dear and special friends here, I am not certain I can ever convey enough how much you have helped me through the rough and rocky spots. I feel honoured to have you all in my life. To Brenda, I thank you for your strength, honesty and unending dry humour, and for allowing me to see the beautiful angel both outside and within. To Rob, I never stop to imagine how I could have endured without your gentle kindness, sincerity and compassion. You have a great spirit and a great gift for painting, one you freely share. To Linda, I will always remember our mutual "soul searching" sessions, where I was graced by a woman of integrity, intelligence and caring. How many pounds of chicken wings do you think we've been through? To Fiona, the first person I met here, I am grateful to have had the friendship of such a loving, funny and special person. We shared not only much pain, but also wonderful fun. Thank you, peanut. To David, a kind, patient and giving person, I look fondly on our evening coffee breaks in the studio, filled with lots of laughter, ideas and honest talk. Are you ever gonna wear that tortoise shell? To Jill, I thank you for your radiant warmth and caring, and for an insight that never ceases to stop me in my tracks. You are truly so kind. To Maria-Anna, the program would not have been the same if we hadn't had our evenings of "S" cookies and wine, veggie burgers and beer. I thank you warmly for your openness, fun and support. Thank you Helen for the constant exchange of ideas, as well as for your beautiful laugh and your beautiful cat. To Laura and Ian, I thank you for all the times of good jazz, great dialogue and immense fun. You both have a way of combining "sweetness with an edge", a blend I am partial to, and I cherish the support, generosity and caring you've shown to me all along the way. And to dear Richard, your humour and wonderful laugh, your patience and tenderness got me through the final leg of my thesis, and for this I cannot express my warm feelings enough ... and no, that's a *good* thing!

I must also express my gratitude to my studio mates: Rob, Gordon, Eric, Dave, Ian, Jeff B., Jeff K., Brad, Ruby, Richard and Kara; for helping me move my "monsters" around, and for making the painting space a supportive, caring and respectful place, conducive to making art. This is also extended to Bianca, Brenda and Mike in the "other" studio, a trio with whom I shared lots of laughter and good conversations about art and life. Thanks also to Barb, Linda Ould, Daryl, Lou, Ruby, Kathie and the "131 boys" for your warm smiles, hugs and beer breaks. They really helped get me through.

I am very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with three committed and kind individuals during my time in graduate school: Phil Darrah, my advisor, as well as Lyndal Osborne and Liz Ingram. I most honestly convey thanks to you Phil for your sensitivity, patience, intelligence and unbeatable eye for colour. I really enjoyed working with you, and have a deep appreciation for the way you kept me focused on my art while life kept trying to knock me over. To Lyndal and Liz, I also express my gratitude. Your enthusiasm, support and unbounding energy are very special gifts. Thank you for stepping out of the print room and into my painting studio.

Thank you also to Desmond Rochfort and Colleen Skidmore for your feedback and support over my time in the program, and to Joanne Wallace from the English department for being such a wonderful addition to my thesis committee. I also want to thank Dick Der, Louise Asselstine and Dave Roles for your on-going technical assistance (and constant cajoling!), to Blair and Shelly in the gallery, and to Deb, Patti and Sharon in the office for your hard work, great humour and kind words.

Many thanks are expressed to Linda Ould, Jill, Fiona and Jerzy for the loan of frames for the exhibition, and to my team of "experts", Dave, Richard, Fiona, Maria-Anna and Brenda, for assisting me with framing all the works. Next series, I work in miniatures.

I must also convey my honest appreciation to Lynn, Devin, Leslie, Kim, Marlene, Donna, John, Sadia and Linda for allowing me to portray you as slothful, vain, nepharious, raging, greedy or otherwise individuals, for the sake of this series. And speaking of gluttony, do I still owe any of you a beer?

A word of thanks also to Wayne Roberts and the staff of the Zoology Museum for all your assistance, and to Jan Maehler for the loan of the stuffed raven (I think I saw it move once!).

Lastly, but most importantly, I extend my deep thanks to my family. To my remarkable parents, Shirley and Richard; to my dear, sweet and silly sisters, Donna and Lisa; to my funny and kind brothers, Stephen and Paul, and to Sandi, Agnes and John: I am blessed to have such a wonderfully supportive and accepting group of people behind me. You shared with me my pain, loss and grief over the year, but never stopped believing I could finish. Thank you so, so much.

It's later than you think later is. Right now snow is falling, a magpie presents itself against a blank, tracks are covered in minutes. One meandering walk across a vacant lot can lead to hundreds straying from the straight and narrow, thinking this is not how the crow flies as they walk the trampled path. Or that one walk can be forgotten under the falling white, each headbent traveller signing footprints on a sheet that's already erasing, this sheet is for learning, this sheet can be used again and again. If you're the last one walking when the snow begins to stop, turn sideways and drop, facing the grey sky, move your arms and legs away and up and down like a swimmer going nowhere. Carefully stand, reach into the embers that you carry, sprinkle soot on the angel, over robes and wings and hair, then go on, step by step- what you leave behind will be flying, clear against the cold white.

Ian Birse, 1996

The Seven Deadly Sins and A Murder of Crows
List of Slides

- 1) *A Woman's Work is Never Done*, oil and acrylic with charcoal on board, 7' x 6' 6", 1996
- 2) *The Grass is Always Greener on the Other Side*, oil and acrylic on board, 6' 6" x 8', 1996
- 3) *Possession is One With Loss - Dante*, oil and acrylic on board, 7' 6" x 7' 6", 1996
- 4) *Hell Hath no Fury Like a Woman Scorned*, oil and acrylic on board, 7' 6" x 5' 8", 1996
- 5) *The Spirit is Willing but the Flesh is Weak*, oil and acrylic with charcoal on board, 8' x 4', 1996
- 6) detail, *The Spirit is Willing but the Flesh is Weak*
- 7) *Before A Fall*, oil and acrylic on board, 8' x 5' 8", 1996
- 8) detail, *Before A Fall*
- 9) *A Ravenous Feast*, oil and acrylic on board, total 5' x 16', 1996; left panel (5' x 4')
- 10) *A Ravenous Feast*; centre panel (5' x 8')
- 11) *A Ravenous Feast*, right panel (5' x 4')
- 12) *Weathering Crow*, asphaltum and charcoal on paper, 22" x 30", 1996
- 13) section from *Raven Suite: Requiem for an Undiscovered Poet*, asphaltum and charcoal on paper. Total of 8 pieces, each at 22" x 30", 1996
- 14) installation shot of gallery entrance wall showing *Dante's Raven*, oil on paper, 30" x 25", 1996
- 15) installation shot of gallery main floor, west alcove, showing *Possession is One With Loss*
- 16) gallery main floor, west alcove wall, showing:
left: *Raven*, pastel and charcoal on paper, 22" x 30", 1996
centre: *Crow*, charcoal on paper, 22" x 30", 1996
right: *Crow*, pastel and charcoal on paper, 22" x 30", 1995

list of slides continued...

- 17) gallery lower main floor, showing *A Ravenous Feast* in foreground and portion of *The Grass is Always Greener on the Other Side* in background
- 18) gallery lower main floor, west wall of centre alcove, showing *A Murder of Crows*, mixed media works on paper, each at 22" x 30", 1995-96
- 19) installation shot of gallery upper level, west and south wall, showing *A Woman's Work is Never Done* and portion of *Raven Suite; Requiem for an Undiscovered Poet*
-)) gallery upper level, south and east wall, showing complete of *Raven Suite; Requiem for an Undiscovered Poet* , 1996





The Spirit is Willing but the Flesh is Weak, 1996, oil and acrylic with charcoal on board, 8' x 4'.

Linda Carreiro received a BFA from the University of Manitoba in 1986, and an MFA in Painting from the University of Alberta in 1996. From 1989 to 1992, she worked as the Art Educator at the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba.



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The close relationship Carreiro maintains between the outer physical body and the inner spiritual and emotional body in this series of paintings is clearly visible in *A Woman's Work is Never Done* where the weight of a woman's flesh is symbolic of the heaviness of her spirit. In this painting, which the artist has painted in shades of slow, sad blues, a single woman is seated on the edge of a chair. She leans forward, her head supported by her left hand which protects her face from our curiosity. Around her is washing left unattended, a vacuum cleaner plugged in but immobile, cigarette butts in an ashtray, and a take-out box lies discarded on the floor. The glow of the television is the only warmth, the only companionship this woman seems to feel worthy of. Yet, slouched on the back of her chair, an aerial spirit watches over her.

The questions that Carreiro leaves us to ponder are, "Do the seven deadly sins still live as beliefs? Do we still consider such things as anger and greed as being sinful?" In *The Grass is Always Greener on the Other Side* the two women passing in a pedestrian crosswalk look back at each other and at what could have been. But really, which does society judge to be the lesser of the two evils, staying home with the kids or pursuing a career? In *Before A Fall* who is betraying whom, the woman seated at the top of a precarious corporate ladder, oblivious to those loyal to her, or the keepers of the gate that prevent her from getting a better look?

Does the potential to commit one or all of the cardinal sins continue to remain inside each of us? In *The Seven Deadly Sins and a Murder of Crows*, Carreiro, who has spent the past few years exorcising her own demons, extends an invitation to viewers to face their own.

List of Works

1. *Possession is One With Loss - Dante*, 1996, oil and acrylic on board, 7'6" x 7'6"
2. *The Grass is Always Greener on the Other Side*, 1996, oil and acrylic on board, 6'6" x 8'
3. *A Woman's Work is Never Done*, 1996, oil and acrylic with charcoal on board, 7' x 6'6"
4. *Hell Hath no Fury Like a Woman Scorned*, 1996, oil and acrylic on board, 7'6" x 5'8"
5. *The Spirit is Willing but the Flesh is Weak*, 1996, oil and acrylic with charcoal on board, 8' x 4'
6. *A Ravenous Feast*, 1996, oil and acrylic on board, 5' x 16'
7. *Before A Fall*, 1996, oil and acrylic on board, 8' x 5' 8"
8. *A Murder of Crows*, 1995-96, mixed medias on paper, 6 pieces at 22" x 30"
9. *An Unkindness of Ravens*, 1995-96, mixed medias on paper, 6 pieces at 22" x 30"
10. *Raven Suite: Requiem for an Undiscovered Poet*, 1996, asphaltum and charcoal on paper, 8 pieces at 22" x 30"
11. *Dante's Raven*, oil on paper, 1996, 30" x 25"
12. *Weathering Crow*, 1996, asphaltum and charcoal on paper, 22" x 30"
13. *Crow*, 1995, pastel and charcoal on paper, 22" x 30"
14. *Raven*, 1996, pastel and charcoal on paper, 22" x 30"
15. *Crow*, 1996, charcoal on paper, 22" x 30"
16. *Unforgiven Raven*, 1996, oil and acrylic on board, 2' x 2'



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